A

LETTER

TO A

COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

The Gentleman to whom this Letter was written by a private friend, unconcerned with all Parties, was ſo ſtruck with the arguments it contains, reſpecting Secret Influence, that he determined to Publiſh the whole.

LONDON;
PRINTED FOR J. STOCKDALE,
OPPOSITE
BURLINGTON-HOUSE, PICCADILLY.

M DCC LXXXIV.

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A

LETTER, &c.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HEAR with ſurprize and concern, that you have expreſſed an inclination to give your countenance to that bold, bad Man, who has thrown us all into confuſion; and that he prides himſelf exceedingly, as well he may, in the proſpect of receiving ſupport from a man of your deſcription. If it be ſo, I know the lure which has captivated you. His money you would have thrown in his face. His promiſes, of which he has been more laviſh, you have too much ſenſe, as well as too much honeſty, to be the dupe of. He

knew

knew your ruling paſſion. You are an Enthuſiaſt upon the Independence of Parliament. To that He, who is all things to all men, has applied himſelf. He has been talking to you about *Influence*.

I KNOW that you would be all on fire at the very name of Influence; and I am not ſure that you could, *without being called to order, afterwards* ſo far compoſe yourſelf, as to be in a ſituation to take ſo diſpaſſionate a view of the preſent poſture of public affairs, as a public man ought to do.

IN the hope that I may ſucceed, ſo far as to clear away the rubbiſh which prevents you from ſeeing your object diſtinctly, I ſit down to write to you.

WITH you, my Friend, I will endeavour to reaſon coolly, on a ſubject upon which I confeſs I feel ſome indignation.

As to the man who had addreſs enough to make this impreſſion—the *argumentum ad hominem* is only fit to be uſed to him.

Let him recollect with what induſtry, with what perſeverance, thro' what a variety of channels, publicly and privately, he canvaſſed both Houſes of Parliament; How the influence of office was exerted; how promiſes and threats were dealt about; how every connection was employed, every manœuvre practiſed,* and every nerve

* This more particularly refers to the management of bringing the Commander in Chief and the Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant from Ireland; the bringing the Secretary to the Embaſſy from France, and ſending him back again in time to let the Ambaſſador himſelf make his entre into the Houſe of Lords; which laſt vote was obtained by inveſting the Secretary with the character of Miniſter to the Court of France in the mean time, *not without ſome conſiderable expenditure of the public money.* (Vide Gazette.)

Commodore

nerve ſtrained, to force the Bill through. It was conſiſtent enough to complain, that twenty-ſeven of *his men*, who had promiſed to be *true* to him, had failed him; but it will not be endured, that after all this, *he* ſhould complain of influence.

He had ſenſe enough to know, that this would not go down alone; and therefore he has added another word, which has ſo intoxicating a quality, that the very ſound of it is apt to make the head giddy.

It is *Secret Influence* that Mr. F— complains of.

I ADMIT

Commodore Johnſtone's Court-martial, which ſent a decided enemy to the Bill out of the way, was well timed, and coſt nothing but management.

I ADMIT that Secret Influence is ſufficiently odious in this country: If it had not been ſo, thoſe words would not have been ſelected from a great many others, which might have been uſed with equal propriety, to characterize the tranſactions of the laſt ſix weeks. All that I requeſt is, that you will not ſuffer yourſelf to be impoſed upon by a cant word. Your underſtanding is too good an one, to be ſo dealt with. Let us ſit down and examine, whether there are any traces to be found, in the late tranſactions of that ſecret over-ruling influence, which ought to be reſiſted and condemned in Parliament.

IN making this examination, I hardly know what point to ſet out from.

THE Gentlemen who uſe theſe phraſes, have an advantage over their adverſaries. They get on without the aſſiſtance of any

fact, or of any argument; and, uſing words which have no preciſe ideas annexed to them, to diſpute with them, is to follow an *ignis fatuus*, and to hazard the being found at laſt in a bog.

You and I remember a great deal of talk about Secret Influence, ſome years ago. I never underſtood perfectly what that meant. But people had a notion, that Somebody, who did not ſtand forward and take his ſhare of reſponſibility, gave advice in ſecret to the King, diſinclining him to meaſures which his Miniſters, who were reſponſible, had propoſed. And I believe it was this which people agreed to call Secret Influence. And if they are pleaſed to deſcribe it to be

Monſtrum horrendum, informe, ingens,

and to hold it in great deteſtation, I do not object.

If I were the King of this country, this monſter ſhould not exiſt. *I would chuſe my own Miniſter*; and when I ſaw reaſon to withdraw my confidence, I would turn him out. If Influence did prevail, and I were this Miniſter, I think I ſhould have no difficulty how to act. As ſoon as I perceived that I had the misfortune to loſe his Majeſty's confidence, I would make it my humble requeſt to him, to permit me to retire from a ſervice in which I could be no longer uſeful: But I ſhould not attempt to raiſe a ſtorm in the Houſe of Commons. I like to know what is to be done next; and I ſhould be puzzled how to draw articles of impeachment againſt Secret Influence; becauſe, in my apprehenſion, there wants more of definition and ſpecification, than I find in it, to work it up into a high crime and miſdemeanour.

THIS, I confeſs, may be no line for a Miniſter to take, who has forced his way into the Cloſet. Such a Miniſter would have it to ſay, he came not there through any confidence repoſed in him by his Majeſty; and conſequently, that a want of confidence in him by his Majeſty could be no reaſon for his quitting it. But here a difficulty of another kind occurs. Such a Miniſter would probably be DETESTED *a priori*, and one can hardly imagine, that Secret Councils could do him any prejudice: So that the doctrine of Secret Influence can hardly be made to apply to ſuch a caſe.

IF Mr. F— explained himſelf to you ſo far, as to ſignify that this was the ſort of Secret Influence of which he complained, there is ground upon which I can meet him. I join iſſue with him upon the fact.

I HAVE

I HAVE never been able to diſcover that there is any fact, and to ſhew how accommodating I am, I will add, or any rumour of any fact, which could be a ground for a ſuſpicion, that the King's mind had been prejudiced againſt Mr. F— or his friends, upon the occaſion of the India Bill, either by advice or inſinuation, *ſecretly* conveyed by any man who wiſhed to avoid making himſelf reſponſible for the advice he gave. It is undoubtedly a fact, for a noble Earl, ſtanding in his place in the Houſe of Lords, avowed it, that an Hereditary Counſellor of the King did demand an audience of his Majeſty, for the expreſs purpoſe of offering humble advice upon the ſubject of the Eaſt India Bill.

I PRESUME, there can be no man ſo ignorant as to miſtake this, which is a great conſtitutional privilege, and the birth-right of

of a Peer of the Realm, for Secret Influence.

WHAT the advice was, has not tranſpired. The noble Earl contented himſelf with declaring, that he ſhould be ready to avow and abide by it, whenever he ſhould be properly called upon. If it ſhould turn out to have been humble advice, that if this Bill were preſented to his Majeſty, the anſwer ſhould be, *Le Roy s'aviſera*; and that his Majeſty ſhould inſtantly diſmiſs from his Councils and Preſence, men who had given this demonſtration of their utter unfitneſs to be truſted with the conduct of the Executive Government; I ſhall envy the noble Lord the credit of ſo clear and decided a conduct.

IF a ſpark of doubt remains upon this part of the ſubject, I deſire to carry you back for a moment to the time, when the

the famous Exciſe Bill was in the Houſe of Commons, and I will put this caſe to you—Suppoſe Mr. Pulteney had obtained an audience of the King, and had repreſented to him the pernicious tendency of *the bold and rapid meaſure* of that day, and had humbly beſeeched and adviſed the King to gratify the wiſhes of his people, by removing Sir Robert Walpole from his Councils:

Do you think that Miniſter would have gone to the Houſe, and complained of Secret Influence; or that he would have found any one, who would have liſtened to ſo prepoſterous a complaint?

THUS far then I diſcover no trace of Secret Influence.——Thus far every thing was done in a very open, as well as regular and conſtitutional courſe; and which

which involved, inſtead of avoiding, reſponſibility.

I SHOULD neither ſatisfy my own mind, nor expect to make any impreſſion upon you, if I did not examine this ſubject to the very bottom.

I CERTAINLY do not forget, or mean to paſs unnoticed, certain rumours, which have been induſtriouſly circulated; beſides, I have too much reſpect and deference for a Houſe of Parliament, to treat as wholly unworthy of attention even rumours, upon which that Honourable Houſe has, in its great wiſdom, ſeen reaſon to ground a ſolemn reſolution.

YET you muſt permit me to obſerve, that in paying any attention to rumours, which are ſuppoſed to touch the honour of a perſon of condition, not to mention that

that they do not ſtop *there*, you eſtabliſh a new principle of juſtice, which your mind would revolt from, if the queſtion were, whether you ſhould refuſe a licence to a *hedge ale-houſe-keeper*.

THE rumours are, that the Hereditary Counſellor who has been alluded to, when he came out of the Cloſet, was heard to declare publicly, and did write to certain noble Lords to the ſame effect, that he had authority from his Majeſty to ſay, that his Majeſty did entirely diſapprove of the Eaſt India Bill, and did caſt himſelf upon the Houſe of Lords, the conſtitutional guardians and ſupporters of the rights of his Crown, for his protection againſt what appeared to him to be a no leſs direct attack upon his Monarchy, than upon the Chartered Rights of his Subjects.

THE rumours go one ſtep further, and ſuppoſe application to have come immediately from a Great Perſonage himſelf to particular Lords, upon the ſame ground, and to the ſame effect.

THIS is the ſum and ſubſtance of thoſe rumours, of which ſo much uſe has been made in popular debate, by the help of thoſe faſcinating words, *Secret Influence*: To which this ſuppoſed caſe can be aſſimilated honeſtly by no man who has diſcernment enough to diſtinguiſh the ſpecific difference between a *mouſe and a mountain.*

I SHALL not content myſelf with remarking to you what it is not.

IF in the ſober judgment of honeſt, ſerious, independent men (for I will not miſpend

miſpend my time in addreſſing myſelf to a Faction) it ſhould ever be deemed an object to take up the conſideration of theſe rumours, they muſt be taken up upon a ground of privilege.

And as they related altogether to a Bill depending in the Lords' Houſe of Parliament, with all due deference to the Houſe of Commons, it ſhould ſeem that the excluſive conſideration of them will belong to the Houſe of Lords, unleſs the Lords ſhould think fit to call upon the Lower Houſe, to aſſiſt them in maintaining their privileges.

In the Houſe of Lords, the enquiry would be conducted with temper, and with a ſacred regard to the fixed principles of juſtice, to which their judicature has familiarized them.

If the fact were not aſcertained, they would diſmiſs the ſubject. If it were made out to them in evidence, they would not call it by hard names; but abſtracting themſelves from all conſideration, of how it might bear upon the views and purſuits of this or that Party, they would pronounce upon it according to its true quality and degree. Poſſibly they might find, that according to the ſtrict rigour of the conſtitution of a Houſe of Parliament, all ſolicitation of the votes of that Houſe, under all circumſtances whatſoever, is a breach of the privileges of that Houſe.—And what will become of you, my Friend, who cannot have forgot, that when the Grand Trunk wanted to cut off a corner of your park, there were cards ſent to ſome of the Members of *both Houſes* to, *ſolicit their attendance?*

I RATHER

I RATHER think that Mr. F— himſelf will be diſpoſed to admit, that it might alſo be brought home to him, reſpecting this very Bill, that even he had been unguarded enough to convey ſome dark diſtant hints of wiſhes, in his modeſt way, which upon a very rigorous inveſtigation, might be deemed to amount to a ſolicitation of votes in both Houſes of Parliament. The King's Meſſengers have not yet recovered the fatigue of their extraordinary ſervices.

IF I might adviſe, therefore, I would propoſe, (if it be intended, as were much to be wiſhed, to reſtore the purity of the conſtitution of the two Houſes, and to renovate the vigour of the King's Negative, which will be then his proper and only mode of interpoſition in matters of Legiſlature) that we ſhould begin with a general

general Amneſty; a ſevere retroſpect might be inconvenient.

Mr. F— will receive my propoſal with caution. He muſt leave himſelf an opening for explanations, as circumſtances may call for them. Out of power, he will object both to Influence and Amneſty: Should he return to power, he will have no objection to the Influence of the Crown in Parliament.

You, my Friend, who are not the conductor, and will not be the ſlave of a Party, will admit of no reſervations, for the accommodating of principles to a change of circumſtances. Your anſwer will be explicit; "Do with me as you pleaſe; but let us "reſtore the Conſtitution: The King has "his Negative, which is his protection "againſt encroachments in Parliament up-

"on

" on the Prerogative of the Crown. The " Subject has his Petition. Let every ap- " pearance of interpoſition or ſolicitation " in every ſhape, be condemned."

SITTING in my cloſet, and contemplating the theory of the Conſtitution, I agree that all ſolicitation whatſoever, and all interpoſition of the Crown in Parliament in particular, whether by the perſon of the King, or by a Miniſter, are to be condemned; and that the Crown is to reſort to its Negative.

BUT before we act upon this ſtrict theory, it may be fit to conſider, whether we have not in practice admitted of ſuch a modification of it, in the tranſacting of parliamentary buſineſs, as may make it unfit, and almoſt unjuſt, to recur in a particular caſe, and with a retroſpect, to the ſtrict rule.

I WAS

I was very much ſtruck with a circumſtance that occurred lately in the Houſe of Lords. When the Faction thought themſelves ſecure of carrying their Eaſt India Bill in that Houſe, they talked of impeaching any man who ſhould dare to adviſe his Majeſty to negative that Bill.

In point of fact, the Crown has not been adviſed to interpoſe the Negative, in more than two or three inſtances, ſince the Revolution. And it is true enough, that it is Whig doctrine, that the man is to be impeached who ſhall now be hardy enough to give that advice.

You will ſay that this is talking very abſurdly; that the right of interpoſing the Negative is of the very eſſence of the Conſtitution; that a good correſpondence between the three Branches of the Legiſla-

ture

ture may ſuſpend the exerciſe of it for a time: But that ſhould points of ſerious difference ariſe among them, they muſt on all ſides reſort to their ſtrict rights, as the only rules for their government.

I AGREE with you, that the Whigs do not in this inſtance reaſon correctly; but in the mean time, theſe opinions muſt be very embarraſſing, and muſt throw very great difficulties in the way, when the queſtion ſhall occur, whether the Negative ſhall be interpoſed? And an honeſt man might incline not to look with a very jealous eye upon almoſt any expedient that could be propoſed, to prevent the neceſſity of recurring to the Negative, at the hazard of offending the prejudices of a very powerful Party in this country, who are apt to maintain their opinions with a ſtubborn firmneſs, bordering upon obſtinacy.

The difficulties in the way of the Negative would ſwell to an alarming magnitude, if we were to go into a particular conſideration of the inconvenience of that ſituation in which the exerciſe of the Negative muſt place the King and the two Houſes of Parliament.

The theory of the conſtitution of our ſyſtem of Legiſlation, takes for its baſis, that the Executive Government is carried on out of Parliament; that the aids which are granted to it by Parliament, are extraordinary. The exigencies of the country have compelled us to deviate ſo widely from this theory, that the Executive Government cannot be ſupported without the aſſiſtance of annual ſupplies, which muſt originate in the Lower Houſe of Parliament.

The immediate neceſſary conſequences of any interruption of the correſpondence between the King and the two Houſes, muſt therefore be ſo fatal, that the neceſſity of interpoſing the Negative is to be deprecated by every ſober well-wiſher to the Commonwealth.

It appears to me, that a ſtrong ſenſe of the preſſure of this political evil, has ſuggeſted a modification in the tranſacting of parliamentary buſineſs, which has given to the Crown all reaſonable benefit of the Negative in another way; and it is by referring to that modification, as it ſeems to me, that the with-holding of the Negative for ſo many years is to be accounted for.

You muſt not call upon me here for a definition. I will not undertake to convey a preciſe idea of that which is floating

in my mind at this moment; but I will endeavour to make you underſtand what I mean, by putting a queſtion to you: Have you not obſerved, that in the beſt times ſince the Revolution, the Miniſters of the Executive Government have had an influence in debate, which has generally enabled them to ſtop an obnoxious Bill in its paſſage? And is there a doubt, whether ſuppoſing the Eaſt India Bill had been brought into Parliament, without communication with the late Miniſters, whether they would have heſitated to interpoſe with all the Influence of Office, in order to cruſh it before it grew to a ſize, which ſhould oblige them to arm themſelves with the Negative.

This ſort of interpoſition has been endured, and probably will be endured: Yet it looks extremely like the interpoſition of the Crown in Parliament.

ORDINARILY,

Ordinarily, the Crown has interpoſed through the Miniſter of the Crown; for it has not ordinarily occurred, that the Servants of the Crown have exerted the Influence of the Crown againſt the Crown.

Let us conſider for a moment, what would be the conſequence of ſo ſingular an occurrence. It would become the duty of the perſon of the King to reſiſt the Servants of the Crown, in order to ſupport the Rights of the Crown.

According to the ſtrict theory of the Conſtitution, the King, who is not to interfere in Parliament, is to be driven to defend the Rights of the Crown, by interpoſing his Negative. Let me then aſk you, will not every political conſideration, which countenances the ſubſtitution of

of influence in debate, in the room of the Negative, apply in ſuch a caſe to an interpoſition by the perſon of the King?

I HAVE no objection to our ſetting about the bracing up our relaxed ſyſtem; but we ſhould proceed cautiouſly, and with a due regard to the nobler parts of it.

IN the progreſs of the Eaſt India Bill, it was ſufficiently notorious, that the Influence of the Crown was turned againſt the Crown, and exerted with ſingular activi y, if not malignity; and that abuſe continued to operate againſt the King in a very great degree, even after the Bill was in the Upper Houſe; becauſe the Miniſter, the oſtenſible Miniſter (if he likes that word) though he had forfeited all pretenſions to the character of the King's Servant, continued to exerciſe the

ordinary

ordinary functions of his Miniſtry, which continued to him a very great degree of influence, the full uſe of which he did not fail to make.

If this Bill appeared to the King to be a direct attack upon the Rights of his Crown, it became his duty to reſiſt it.

Is it too much to agree, that under ſuch extraordinary circumſtances, if there remained any ſmall portion of influence, which could receive its direction from the perſon of the King, it ſhould be allowed to range itſelf under its own banners, inſtead of going over to the enemy?

For puny ſtomachs, who can ſwallow a Miniſter's being permitted to manage the Influence of the Crown in Parliament, but ſicken at the thoughts of the King's

King's intimation of any wiſh of his through any other channel—I have this help to digeſtion: I ſay, the noble Lord, who had the courage and the honeſty to offer his ſervices to his injured Prince, (would to God he had the firmneſs to have abided by it) was the King's Miniſter, the only Miniſter the King had: The others were no Miniſters, but Uſurpers and Tyrants, who had no title to their ſituations, but that they had made themſelves too powerful to be removed.

The whole of this argument is reduced to a ſingle point: If you reſolve to condemn all interpoſition of the Crown in Parliament, as well that exerted by Mr. F—, in ſupport of this Bill, as that which is ſaid to have been exerted by a noble Lord, in the King's name, againſt it, it is well—I admire your Stoiciſm, and ſubmit;

mit; but I muſt inſiſt, that there is no conſtitutional principle, no principle of common ſenſe, or common honeſty, upon which you can impeach the latter, and defend the former.

You will then have two delinquents before you, Mr. F— and the noble Lord alluded to. I ſhall leave the firſt to extenuate his guilt as he may; on the behalf of the latter, I have ſomewhat to offer. The object of that noble Lord was, to relieve the King from a ſituation, to which, I am ſure you will agree with me, he ought not to have been reduced. He felt himſelf perſonally attacked, and that the Rights of his Crown, through him, were violated, and by his own ſworn ſervants. His ſingle reſource was his Negative; the exerciſe of it, at all times, involving conſiderations of much delicacy

and importance, and great reſponſibility; in his particular ſituation almoſt impracticable. He ſaw himſelf ſurrounded by men, in whom he could have no confidence, were it only for the manner in which they forced themſelves upon him; and who, in this particular meaſure, were his determined oppoſers. They had turned the Influence of his Crown in Parliament, as far as they could direct it, againſt him. They had hurried the Bill through one Houſe—they were urging the other Houſe to paſs it.

Is it a kind, or generous treatment of the gracious Prince upon the Throne, to inſiſt, that in ſuch a criſis, the conduct of an individual Lord, who interpoſed his own perſon to protect his Sovereign from the danger which threatened him, ſhould have been more guarded, and more accu-

rately correct, than if he had been conducting the ordinary operations of Government, under the advice of the confidential Servants and Counſellors of the Crown.

It is not the natural turn and diſpoſition of the people of this country, to treat their Sovereign ſo harſhly. They will rather enter into his ſituation, reſent the indignities which have been offered to him, rejoice in his deliverance from his bonds, and give Mr. F—— and his friends very clearly to underſtand, that the King of Great Britain, whoſe ſubjects are free, ſhall not be himſelf a ſlave. And when they reflect upon the glorious conſequences of this ſuppoſed theoretic irregularity imputed to the noble Lord; that he has ſaved his Country, as well as his Prince, from the bondage of the

over-ruling, uncontroulable influence of Indian Patronage, veſted in perpetuity in ſeven of Mr. F—'s Creatures, they will ſay to Mr. F—, "Talk to us no more of "Secret Influence—Secret Influence, if "this be Secret Influence, HATH REDEEMED "ITSELF."

I FIND myſelf plunged into the politics of the preſent hour, much deeper than I intended to be, when I ſat down to write. I perceive that I have already exceeded the limits of a Letter; but I have gone too far, to recede; and I cannot finiſh the ſubject, without diſcuſſing two or three other topics of debate, upon the queſtion, who is to be the Miniſter of this Country, in the various forms of Reſolutions and Addreſſes, &c. &c. under which that queſtion has been ſo frequently agitated, ſince this country had the fortune to ſee Mr. F— diveſted of that character?

WITH

With ſome men this has been a topic: Affecting ot know the interior of a Cabinet, and the preciſe extent of the communication between the King and a ſet of Miniſters, who had made themſelves Miniſters againſt his will; they ſay that the King's diſapprobation of the India Bill ſhould have been communicated through that channel. You, I am ſure, will agree with me, that this is no ground for taking up a man, to whoſe character or principles there are objections.

But ſee how much this propoſition aſſumes.

It ſuppoſes a fair repreſentation to have been made to the King, by his enemies, in a point wherein they meant to aim a mortal blow at his power.

It ſuppoſes the King to have been perfectly Maſter of the whole of that pernicious plan; which, though you and I are entirely convinced it would have ruined this country, had it ſucceeded, many an honeſt man in the Houſe of Commons to this hour cannot ſee.

Debate opened our eyes. May we not reaſonably ſuppoſe, the ſame channel of information to have brought home to the King's view the danger of his ſituation.

This could not be, till after the Miniſters were too far committed to recede, had they been leſs determined than we know they were. To converſe with them upon it, were to yield his throat to the knife, inſtead of preparing to defend himſelf.

I do not know how you may feel; I am glad he did not hold this lamb-like conduct.

I have been much puzzled to underſtand ſome other Gentlemen, who have talked to me about the King's doing no wrong, and have jumpt to a concluſion, that it was againſt Law; or if not againſt Law, that it was againſt the Conſtitution; or if not that, that it was ſome how or other very wrong for him to adviſe with any body, but the Miniſters for the time being; becauſe they are reſponſible for the meaſures which they adviſe.

Do theſe Gentlemen mean, that becauſe the King can do no wrong, he ſhould have adviſed with nobody but Mr. F—, as being the reſponſible Miniſter upon the queſtion, whether he, Mr. F—, was to be turned out, and my Lord Sydney put

put in his place? In truth, the maxim, *that the King can do no wrong*, is a maxim of Law, not of State, to be applied to thoſe Acts, which take their effect through the medium of Seals and Officers, and not to the perſonal, immediate, incommunicable operations of his Sovereignty.

Here, in conſideration of Law, there is no adviſer; in fact, there can be none; as in the inſtance of the King's changing his Miniſters, is clear to a demonſtration.

Supposing that, by a proper uſe of theſe topics, the two Houſes, and that of the Commons in particular, ſhould have been impreſſed with a due ſenſe of the merits of Mr. F—'s Adminiſtration: To give this a proper bearing upon the preſent ſtate of things, where we find the King appointing his own Miniſter, and that Miniſter not Mr. F—, it has been found

found neceſſary, to ſtate to Parliament this propoſition; that no Miniſter can go on in this country, who has not the confidence of the Houſe of Commons.

Mr. F--- has not ſaid in expreſs words, that a Miniſter muſt have a dead Majority with him, ready to vote whatever he ſhould propoſe. *He muſt have the Confidence of the Houſe of Commons.*

If this ſmooth word *confidence* really means *Majority*, and it means majority or it means nothing, let us meet the propoſition as it is meant to be underſtood; and I cannot heſitate to declare, that it is the moſt profligate ſentiment in politics that ever was conceived, that to endure to hear it ſtated, would diſgrace a Houſe of Parliament; and if ever a Houſe of Parliament ſhould reſolve to act upon it, from

that hour, the Conſtitution is ſubverted. Can any thing be more profligate, than for men, whoſe indiſpenſible duty in Parliament is to watch over, protect and maintain the Conſtitution of our Government as by law eſtabliſhed, inſtead of attending to that duty, to link themſelves together under one man, in order to lift him into office, and ſupport him there? They are in a worſe condition than galley ſlaves—their ſervitude has the baſeneſs of being voluntary.

To effect this diſhonourable purpoſe, they muſt abuſe every power and violate every truſt, which the Conſtitution hath repoſed in them; they muſt encroach upon the rights, and weaken and diminiſh lawful authority of the Crown, by wreſting and perverting the whole inſtitution of a Houſe of Parliament.

I AM

I AM not to learn, that there are powers veſted in the Houſe of Commons, which might be ſo perverted; if there could be found men capable of making ſuch a uſe of them.

A MAJORITY might *vote* and *addreſs* a Miniſter out of his place, IF HE HAPPENED NOT TO BE MADE OF SOUND MATERIALS; ſuch a Majority might *withhold* the neceſſary ſupplies, or *manage* a mutiny bill, till they had extorted from the King a Miniſter more to their mind. And I can conceive, that it would be a circumſtance of no moment, in the opinion of ſuch a Majority, that the Miniſter, againſt whom theſe manœuvres were practiſed, was a man of extraordinary talents, unhackneyed in the vices of the age; a man of honor, integrity, and public virtue; not only

bove all ſuſpicion, but above all compariſon.

I CAN only ſay, with Sir Harry Erſkine, ſuch a Majority would be a profligate Majority.

I AM perſuaded the Houſe would not have borne to have been told, that the Miniſter muſt have a *Majority* to go on, or that a *Majority* of that Houſe might *nominate* the Miniſter: It belongs to modern refinement, that the unchaſte ſentiment ſhould be wrapt in decent phraſe: No modeſt ear is then offended. Hear him, hear him! was echo'd through the Houſe, when Confidence was talked of.

YOU, my Friend, did not join in that cry; but allow me to uſe the privilege of our old friendſhip, to tell you, that you did not

not do your duty, in not ſpeaking to Order, and in not endeavouring to awaken the Houſe to a ſenſe of what was due to their own dignity, which is never more violated, than when a profligate ſentiment is permitted to eſcape without cenſure: When it is applauded dignity is out of the queſtion; we muſt look for another word.

IT is a ſmall circumſtance, that this idea of confidence *tends* TO COMPASS AN UNJUST END BY FRAUDULENT MEANS; if it reſted there, I who have no perſonal intereſt in the queſtion, who is to be Miniſter, would let the ſcandal of ſuch a meaſure be its puniſhment.

BUT the conſequences of this doctrine are ſo fatal, and ſtrike ſo directly at the very vitals of the Conſtitution, that every honeſt man, who ſees it in the light that I do,

do, is bound to give the alarm; and if Mr. Richard Fitzpatrick will permit me to borrow his very polite and claſſical alluſion, *ſave the capitol.*

If ever this doctrine ſhould prevail, from that hour the Majority of the Houſe of Commons, who alone can diſpoſe of the confidence of the Houſe, degenerate into a Faction. They are liſted—and however they may be flattered upon the conſequence they derive from making and unmaking Miniſters, they muſt ſubmit to be diſciplined, and muſt be taught to obey the word of command.

Let me put it home to the breaſts of the Coalition, whether, during the progreſs of the Eaſt India Bill, they did not feel the bitterneſs of this ſituation: The ſteadieſt ſoldiers are not fond of being puſhed

on

on by the point of the bayonet, to a deſperate enterprize, againſt the ſober opinion of all, but their commander.

CAN an ambition to make Miniſters tempt men, (ſome of them I know to be honeſt and worthy men out of Parliament) to put themſelves again into ſuch a ſituation.

Is there a Country Gentleman, who can be ſo blind as not to ſee, that in liſting with ſuch a party, he ſtrikes his name out of that deſcription of men, whoſe honorable and independent ſituation, if they were united, would enable them to hold the balance in their hands, during theſe ſtruggles for power.

WHEN theſe men loſe their weight, the conſtitutional controul of Parliament over the

the Miniſter is annihilated. The Majority are engaged with him——they are embarked in his meaſures--they are the Miniſter—juſt as an army would be; and the individual members would be pretty much in the ſtate of other troops, fed and cloathed and paid, or permitted to live at free quarter.

WHAT is to become of the country under this force, is predicted by all the Writers upon Liberty. If ever the time ſhould come, when one branch of the Legiſlature ſhall find means to draw to itſelf the Executive Power of the country; *actum eſt de republica.*

YOU will aſk me what is to be done? The new Miniſters will neither have ſtrength or nerves to go on; a Government by the Coalition is better than none.

MY

My opinion is, that the new Miniſters ought to go on; that all honeſt men ſhould unite, to break the Coalition, and to reduce the members of it, to the ſize and condition of ſubjects. That done, (and it will be well worth ſtruggling for at a greater expence than a diſſolution of Parliament) things will fall into their proper train. Parliament will hold the balance, as it ought to do: All theſe powerful men will ſtand in awe of that juſt ſuperiority and controul, which the Conſtitution hath eſtabliſhed in Parliament.

Miniſters will not feel themſelves ſtrong enough to hazard bold and rapid meaſures. They will have a juſt meaſure of confidence repoſed in them, until they render themſelves unworthy of it by their conduct. There will be no peeviſh, no factious oppoſition made to them; but

they muſt not hope for dead majorities: They muſt derive their ſupport from their integrity; from the juſtice, and wiſdom of their councils.

INSTEAD of a Coalition of commanding influences, we may hope to ſee a Coalition of great talents. All the talents this country can boaſt of are not more than ſufficient, to form an adminiſtration which ſhall be equal to the taſk, of reſtoring our public affairs.

I FOR one moſt anxiouſly look forward to that day, when the very man, whoſe public conduct I have been arraigning, ſhall be reſtored to a very large ſhare of that power which he has abuſed. He has wonderful talents, intrepidity, activity, induſtry; let him learn moderation. His own good underſtanding, if it could be once permitted to act for itſelf, would inform him

him upon ſome other points, where he is wilfully ignorant. The decency which belong to public character, and public ſituations, cannot be violated with impunity.—A ſmall doſe of hellibore will not do; yet I truſt I ſhall live to ſee Mr. F—ſuſtain with dignity the character of a loyal ſubject of his preſent Majeſty, a Patriot, and a Stateſman.

If by any ſtrange accident, he were to ſee what I have written, I ſhould expect that he would obſerve with a contemptuous ſmile, that my hypotheſis is likely to receive a very rude ſhock, on or about the twelfth inſtant. I hope not----I hope the Miniſters will be ſupported. If they ſhould not *have the confidence of the Houſe* on that day, I hope they have nerves to go on, 'till they have done ſomethiug to forfeit it. I truſt they are Engliſhmen, and that they will not be

deterred from doing their duty, by the apprehenſion of the dangers of the civil war without bloodſhed, which was talked of. *Anglie* hard words. I truſt they will remember what they owe to themſelves, to their King, and to their country.

THEY have taken office in the face of a Majority of the Houſe of Commons. A ſmall band of men, reſpectable for their rank, their talents, and above all, their private character, have united to reſcue the King, out of the hands of a deſperate Faction, who meant to enſlave him, and who had the hardineſs to attempt it, by means which violated the fundamental principles upon which our Monarchy is eſtabliſhed, and tended to create an uncontroulable, corrupt, influence in both Houſe of Parliament,

THIS is high ground, if men would but feel it to be ſo; it is a ground from whence they cannot be forced, if they will but reſolve to ſtand upon it. The law of the land, the conſtitution of our Government, are with them; the People will be with them---It is impoſſible that they ſhould reſiſt the impreſſion which ſuch a ſtate of things will make.

ANGRY words may be dealt about; but who is there among the Miniſters that is vulnerable? Faction has no hold upon men of ſuch a deſcription. I may be told of the Peace. That vote is one of the things I complain of. The merits of the Peace, and the merits of the Chippenham Election, were determined preciſely upon the ſame grounds. This, and every other effort that can be made, being ſimply an effort, by men whoſe aim it is to force the

King

King to turn better men out, in order to put themſelves in, muſt weaken and diſgrace them; and I am ſanguine enough to expect, that their numbers will be ſo reduced, before the end of the Seſſions, as to admit of a quiet concluſion of it, and a firm eſtabliſhment of the Miniſtry.

But all this reaſoning comes too late—they have committed themſelves. It is impoſſible to aſſign a reaſon for taking Office, in the face of a Majority, with a determination to quit, if that Majority ſhould hold together for a day, or a week, or a month. If they quit in that manner, they will be reproached with having raſhly interrupted a ſettled Government, without plan, and without reſources; with having ruined the King's affairs, and riveted his chains; and with the additional diſgrace of having unneceſſarily abandoned

doned a poſt which was tenable; upon the preſervation of which, the ſalvation of this country depended.

THIS is a very long Letter, but I could not deny myſelf the ſatisfaction of imburdening my mind to you, on a ſubject, upon which as it appeared to me, you were going wrong. The part which a man of your character, fortune, and real independence ſhall take, may decide the fate of the Miniſter; and in his fate, that of the country of which I truſt you will long continue to be the ornament, and ſupport,

I am, with the trueſt regard,

My dear Sir,

Your moſt obedient,

And faithful humble Servant.

London,
January 6th, 1784.

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